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W. R. H.

A Treatise on Dysentery, by Robert Randolph Turner of Fauquier, Virginia.

A treatise on Dysentery.

Doctor Cullen defines this disease to be, "One of a contagious nature, in which the patient has frequent mucous evacuations, accompanied by much griping, and followed by a tenesmus; the stools altho frequent, being small in quantity, and the matter voided, chiefly mucous, often streaked with blood. At the same time, the natural fæces seldom appear; and when they do, it is generally in substances of a compact and hardened form." This definition is perhaps, as correct as any other, with one exception;—I allude to its being of a contagious nature. That Dysentery may be propagated by contagion, has been advocated by some of our most able writers; still the opinion, at the present day, is not acceded to, by the most thinking and judicious practitioners.

The disease is much more incident to warm climates, than cold ones; it prevails, generally, towards the end of summer, or the beginning of autumn; continuing from about six

weeks, to two months, sometimes longer. At this season of the year, it is undoubtedly, in our country, very frequently an epidemic, and as far as I can judge, is more to be attributed to the influence of an impure atmosphere, than to any other cause. We sometimes find it very prevalent and severe, after close and hot weather; especially if after this, the body be exposed to a damp and cold atmosphere. It generally appears, about the same time, with autumnal remittent and intermittent fevers; and with them it is frequently complicated or combined; it is, likewise, sometimes complicated with typhus. It varies in different seasons and years, so as to require different, and sometimes opposite modes of treatment.

As I stated before, Dysentery has been supposed, by many, to arise from contagion, generated in the system of one person and imparted to another. But from the character, which the disease generally assumes, in our country, I think we have no sufficient grounds for such an opinion. Where there are many crowded together, as happens in gaols and hospitals, and when the climate is originally typhus, or assumes that character in its

progress, I presume it may possibly be communicated by contagion. The disease however, may be attributed to other sources, namely —

Cold and moisture succeeding quickly to intense heat or great drought, by which the perspiration is suddenly checked, and a determination made to the alimentary canal. It is very frequently owing to the influence of miasma, the ordinary cause of our remittent and intermittent fevers. I believe, it most generally happens, that when Dysentery arises from this source, it will assume the remittent form, and that the liver is more or less concerned. A Dysentery arising from the general condition of the atmosphere, differs, I believe, from the remittent and intermittent fevers, only in the intestinal affection, and requires a very similar treatment.

We have also very good reason to believe, that the disease is sometimes produced, by the use of putrid aliment. A particular disposition in the atmosphere, has been thought to give rise to it. The application of cold to the

body, and the reception into the stomach, of poisonous and irritating substances, may also induce the complaint. A change of diet, from a highly stimulating to a less strengthening regimen, is another cause. To this may be added the use of impure and stagnant water.

A constant exposure to the sun, during the hottest weather, obstructed perspiration, giving rise to the want of a healthy action on the surface of the body; and, in fine, whatever increases the natural irritability of the intestines, may be numerated among the causes of Dysentery.

Sometimes it accompanies catarrh; sometimes it alternates with rheumatism; and indeed, it has been considered by some, a catarrhal or rheumatic affection of the intestines.

Some have supposed, that the disease may be propagated by contagion, arising from the effluvia of the feces of dysenteric patients, and not from the febrile perspiration or breath. I believe it never to be contagious, when it prevails in consequence of miasmatic exhalations.

[illegible]

The [illegible]

[illegible] may be [illegible] to believe that it is [illegible] bo- [illegible] In this country, it generally [illegible] some one of the [illegible] I believe that the [illegible]

[illegible]

I believe [illegible] with [illegible]
[illegible] that the [illegible]
[illegible] Stomach [illegible]
[illegible] when the [illegible]
[illegible] the [illegible]
[illegible] by the last [illegible]
[illegible] the [illegible]
[illegible] not [illegible]
[illegible] the stomach [illegible]
[illegible]

Question: [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] the [illegible]
[illegible] The [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] noises [illegible] the [illegible]

I am [illegible] with a number of [illegible].

Sometimes, for the first three or four days, the [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] conser-

[illegible] inches, but

[illegible] Tose-

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

relation

Under

derived from the [illegible]

[illegible]

Meanwhile [illegible]

[illegible] the attack [illegible] as it

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] can be [illegible]

[illegible] has [illegible]

[illegible]

When the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to the [illegible] with the [illegible] of [illegible] bones.

I have [illegible] from the [illegible] [illegible] that the application of a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] complaint for the purpose of [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

After the inflammatory symptoms have been subdued, and the bones rejoined [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] which at this [illegible] of the complaint are [illegible] very [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] have found a combination of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] in small quantities [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] very useful [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Mr. Hilar Gill [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] I have [illegible]

[illegible] from the use of [illegible]

[illegible] some [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] to the [illegible] of the [illegible]

[illegible]

A little opium, combined with a grain or two of ipecacuanha, is very useful, in order to answer this indication. It is stated upon good authority, that occasional bloodletting, in small quantities, has done much good in this form of the complaint. The patient should be warmly clothed, and flannel should be worn next the skin, for the purpose of keeping up a gentle diaphoresis. which may be done by a proper regimen, and regular exercise, particularly on horseback, if the patients strength will admit of it.

It will be best to abstain from the use of fruit, and all other food, which is calculated to keep up the disorder and laxity of the bowels.

When we have reason to believe that there is obstruction of the liver, denoted, principally, by a clayey appearance of the stools, tenderness upon pressure over the region of that organ, and sallow countenance, we must use mercury, until the symptoms give way.

In this case, the blue pill is the best preparation to which we can resort, according to some of our most experienced practitioners.

Finis.